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SKETCH OF A PLAN

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TO

PREVENT CRIMES.

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By JOHN DONALDSON, Esq.

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L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR THE AUTHOR :

AND SOLD BY J. MURRAY, NO. 32, FLEET-STREET.

1792.



TO THE  
WORTHY INHABITANTS  
OF  
LONDON AND WESTMINSTER,  
The following Short  
SKETCH OF A PLAN  
TO  
PREVENT CRIMES,

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

LONDON,  
Nov. 16, 1792.



THE  
CRIMINAL

LONDON AND WEST

The following sheet

SKETCH OF A PLAN

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IS HEREBY RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

LONDON  
Nov. 16. 1852.



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# SKETCH OF A PLAN

TO

## PREVENT CRIMES.

**I** HAVE had the honour to communicate several hints on this business some time ago; but the only printed one is in the 38th page of my Miscellaneous Proposals\*, viz. "The 4th Proposition, To prevent house-breaking, and all other acts of violence and depredation. It must be evident to all, that printing a full and particular account how this is to be done, would not only be improper, but in a great measure defeat the intention of my design. Though a great part of this must be kept from the public eye, yet no part of it will be withheld from those who ought to know it. Therefore all I can now mention is, that if the first proposal be properly conducted, by providing work for all idle and disorderly people, there will be none left to break houses, &c. and should such a thing happen, they will be immediately detected."

\* Sold by Mr. Murray, No. 32, Fleet-street.

I afterwards gave to a few friends the following Proposal:—" As Mr. Donaldson's Proposals have by some been thought too extensive, he is willing to meet the ideas of others as much as possible ; and therefore proposes, upon his being secured in an adequate reward, to shew how the 4th Proposition of his printed Proposals may be carried into effect, viz. to prevent house-breaking, and all other acts of violence and depredation. This plan will shew how London, Westminster, and every city or town, may be effectually secured against house-breaking, &c. He will also point out many other advantages, that the inhabitants, as well as strangers, are to receive from his plan being adopted."

Being afterwards advised to give in a more particular plan to the city of London, I gave, on the 9th of April, 1791, to Sir John Rose, Recorder of the city, a petition to the Lord Mayor and Aldermen, which he did me the honour of presenting the 31st of May, when they were pleased to appoint a Committee to meet with me on the 3d of June, at which time I delivered to them the following paper, viz. A Sketch of Mr. Donaldson's Plan to prevent House-breaking, &c. " It is humbly proposed, that there should be a constant watch kept in the city of London and its liberties, both night and day, who are to be regularly changed every hours: those

" watch-

“ watchmen to have a distinguishing dress or  
 “ mark ; and to have power to take up beggars,  
 “ idle and disorderly people, and to guard pas-  
 “ sengers as well as householders ; and that  
 “ the present watchmen, &c. should have the  
 “ offer of being employed in this business,  
 “ only under new regulations : also, those now  
 “ employed in paving, cleaning, and lighting  
 “ the streets, to be included in those intended  
 “ regulations, so as to have the streets swept  
 “ every morning, and all obstructions re-  
 “ moved ; beggars and idle people, &c. taken  
 “ up, and every order of my Lord Mayor, and  
 “ Aldermen, carefully observed.

“ An office to be kept for receiving informa-  
 “ tion, and appointing inspectors to oversee  
 “ the whole of the business, which, if effec-  
 “ tually followed out, will give a cheque to  
 “ idleness, and put an end to begging as  
 “ well as robbing.

“ When the streets are cleaned, and the  
 “ lamps trimmed, early every morning, and a  
 “ watch established to protect passengers, and  
 “ take up offenders, the streets will then be  
 “ safe and commodious to all who walk either  
 “ for business or amusement ; which will great-  
 “ ly promote the trade of London—a city  
 “ justly acknowledged to be the first in emi-  
 “ nence in the world.”

“ It has ever been the astonishment of  
 “ strangers to see the Capital of England so



" remarkable for the interior cleanness of its  
 " houses, to have the streets so dirty, and in-  
 " fested with beggars: when this plan is  
 " adopted, those complaints will be entirely  
 " removed, as its chief object is to keep the  
 " streets clean, and rather to prevent than  
 " punish crimes; for many, under pretence of  
 " begging, mark out, in the day, such places  
 " as they mean to rob in the night. Had such  
 " a watch as the proposed one been esta-  
 " blished some time ago, we should never have  
 " heard of the Monster who struck such terror  
 " into the inhabitants last year, as all who  
 " are insulted will have the watch at hand to  
 " assist them when required.

" If a trial is made of one or more streets  
 " being put under the proposed regulations,  
 " my Lord Mayor and Aldermen will be able  
 " to judge how far it would be proper to ex-  
 " tend it: and Mr. Donaldson is ready to  
 " give every explanation and information that  
 " may be required.

" Besides the advantages already men-  
 " tioned, others might be named; for instance,  
 " the whole expence of watering the streets  
 " will be saved, and the pavement last double  
 " the time."

I was told the Committee made a favour-  
 able report, which the Lord Mayor and Alder-  
 men were pleased to order to lie on the table,  
 where perhaps it may remain till such time

as they resolve to apply for an Act of Parliament to empower them to clean their streets once a day, in place of twice a week (their present method); and also to improve some other parts of their Police. Several of those Gentlemen have done me the honour to say, that my plan had a great deal of merit.

When I saw by the Papers in March last, that a bill was before the House of Commons for an alteration of the Police of Westminster (chiefly for preventing the Justices from taking fees for their own emolument, and for establishing new offices, where the Justices are to have salaries in place of fees), I immediately sent several copies of the sketch of the plan to prevent house-breaking, &c. to the Honourable Members of the Committee who brought in the bill, which I thought might lead to an improvement in it: and, on the 14th of May, the bill, with the amendments, was ordered to be printed, by which it appears, the Justices have power to “ retain and employ a sufficient  
 “ number of fit and able men, whom they are  
 “ authorised and empowered to swear in, to  
 “ act as constables for preserving the peace,  
 “ and preventing robberies and other felonies,  
 “ and apprehending offenders against the peace  
 “ within the said counties of Middlesex and  
 “ Surrey respectively, as well by night as by  
 “ day.” Another of the new clauses runs thus: “ And whereas divers ill-disposed and  
 “ suf-

“ suspected persons, and reputed thieves, fre-  
 “ quent the avenues of public resort, and the  
 “ streets and highways, with intent to commit  
 “ felony on the persons and property of his  
 “ Majesty’s subjects there being ; and although  
 “ their evil purposes are sufficiently manifest,  
 “ the power of his Majesty’s Justices of the  
 “ Peace to demand of them sureties for their  
 “ good behaviour hath not been of sufficient  
 “ effect to prevent them from carrying their  
 “ evil purposes into execution ; be it enacted by  
 “ the authority aforesaid, that from and after  
 “ the 11th day of June, 1792, it shall and  
 “ may be lawful for any constable, head-  
 “ borough, patrol, or watchman, to appre-  
 “ hend every such person, and convey him  
 “ or them before any Justice of the Peace.”  
 As it is certain that those clauses were not  
 in the original bill, it may be presumed, that  
 my communications had some good effect.

Great praises are due to Mr. Burton for pro-  
 posing and bringing in the bill to amend the Po-  
 lice ; and from what the Noble Lords said in the  
 debate on the bill, that the prevention of crimes  
 was far preferable to the punishing of them, I trust  
 that what I propose will awaken the attention  
 of those who have interest and ability to bring  
 in a bill for so benevolent a purpose, that it  
 may be extended to every city or town, &c.  
 which may think proper to adopt it : and,  
 when I am so happy as to receive full security  
 that



that no advantage shall be taken of the plan without my consent, I shall then print the whole; by which it will appear, that all I propose can be done without expence to government, or laying any new tax on the people; and in time it will produce a handsome public revenue.

The way I propose it should be conducted, is by means of two offices, as mentioned in the 47th page of the foresaid proposals, where information and complaints will be received at all hours, both night and day, and every necessary assistance instantly given. I am confident, if those two offices be properly conducted, they will do more to procure due obedience to the laws, and the prevention of crimes, than all the methods that have yet been tried.

It is also proposed, that engines, ladders, &c. should be kept in the watch-houses, and proper persons who can manage them always in readiness; so that on the first appearance of fire, they will give such immediate assistance as to prevent its progress, by which means much property and many lives may be saved: and the watch-houses being open at all hours, will be convenient for all people to go to who require protection or information. What I point out can in no way prejudice the present watchmen, lamplighters, or others employed in or about the streets, it being only to have them put under new regulations, so that

that the business may be better done for the public, and more convenient for themselves, yet not less profitable, as every honest and industrious man ought to have a comfortable living.

It has been said, that the Police of London is very good; there are watchmen for the night, and that there is no need of them in the day: that the streets are cleaned twice a week by Act of Parliament; and that all who do not sweep and clean the foot pavement before their houses every morning, are liable in a fine of five shillings.

No doubt the present watchmen are of great use; but that the system is defective, is evident from the many robberies committed in the night. It is also obvious, that a day watch is necessary on account of the many robberies and assaults committed continually in the most public streets every hour of the day; and the persons assaulted having no assistance at hand, the thieves, &c. escape.

If it be an advantage to clean the streets twice a week, it must be an improvement to have it done every morning; and, if the experiment is made in one or more streets or squares, the good effects of it will be so evident, that, like the new pavement, it will become universal.

As people are unwilling to inform upon their neighbours, I apprehend the best way of  
having

having the foot pavement kept clean, is to have it swept every morning by those who clean the streets. As fining and committing people for their contempt of the police laws has never answered any good end, why should we not, like the good physician, when one remedy fails, try another? The evils complained of do exist.

We have many good laws, but they are not enforced: even in the public streets we see the tops of stage-coaches crowded with passengers, contrary to Act of Parliament. If people are permitted to disregard one law, perhaps they will venture to break another; and so go on from bad to worse, till they are brought to an unhappy end. The constant watch is therefore humbly proposed to prevent those evils, as it is reasonable to suppose that few people will be so hardy as to commit a crime, when they can have no expectation of escaping immediate detection.

The present method of watering and cleaning the streets is unhealthy and dirty; in summer or dry weather it is often difficult to find a place to cross at without going over the shoes. If those who now have the care of the streets and watch, &c. do not think their present funds sufficient to make trial of this proposed plan, by opening a subscription at the bankers', or other proper places, they will soon get enough to begin this business;  
and



and when, after trial, it has been approved of, I shall shew how it may be made general, without laying any new tax on the people.

What I request at present is to have a fair trial made of this improved plan in one or more streets of London or Westminster, which, I humbly hope, will immediately attract the attention of the public.

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*Some Advantages of a Daily and Constant Watch.*

THE public will be protected in their persons and property, both at home and abroad; and will not be interrupted or dirtied by the lamplighters trimming their lamps through the day, which is a great nuisance at present, and justly complained of.

They will be assisted by the watch in cases of fire, and every needful occasion.

They will not be molested with beggars, idle and drunken people, and mad bullocks, &c.

If children or cattle stray, they will be found or heard of at the watch-houses.

The streets will be kept clean and well lighted; and the watch so regulated as to render it impossible for thieves, or other bad people, to commit any depredations on the public, without immediate detection and conviction.

When

When the watch have the charge of keeping the streets clean, they will take care that none throw out any dirt or rubbish.

The servants will be relieved from the trouble of sweeping the pavement before their masters' houses. In fact, every individual will be benefited by this improved plan of keeping the streets clean, well watched and lighted. Besides, being more healthy and pleasant, the trade must be greatly promoted, as the streets will be every where safe and convenient for all who either pass or cross them in all places where this constant watch is extended. Strangers, and those who are at a loss to find their way, have only to apply to the watch.

I hope this short sketch of a plan to prevent crimes will not be unworthy the attention of ministers, magistrates, parishes, societies, companies, and individuals, or the inhabitants of any street, who are all eventually concerned in its success. The greatest argument against it is now removed by the new Police Act, whereby constables, &c. are empowered to take up reputed thieves, &c. : and no doubt this power will be granted to all such cities, towns, &c. as choose to apply for it.

As it is impossible for an individual to bring forward and perfectly establish any new thing of great national concern, it would make me happy if I could meet with some gentlemen of spirit and interest to procure a Charter or  
Act

Act of Parliament to form them into a Company for carrying on so benevolent a plan, so useful for the nation, and profitable for themselves. If they, or others who wish to assist me in this business, will honour me with their real names, and mention where I can speak with them, I trust I shall be able to shew what great advantages they may receive when this and other parts of my general plan are adopted, besides the satisfaction they will have in serving their country.

It is requested that all letters or messages may come free of expence, to the care of Mr. Murray, No. 32, Fleet-Street.





